

we enjoy in this country and in the international community and in the community of democracies? Where are the reporters, the members of the media who are talking about what is happening to Dr. Biscet? Is there not an elemental, an elemental duty and responsibility to talk about these facts by the free press? There is. They know it, and they are failing in that elemental duty.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

MISTREATMENT OF CUBAN POLITICAL PRISONER, DR. OSCAR BISCET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to the continued plight and mistreatment of political prisoners locked in Cuban jails, and obviously joining with my colleagues from Florida, and I thank also my other colleague from New Jersey, specifically paying attention to Dr. Oscar Biscet.

I have spoken on numerous occasions here on the House floor of the crushing campaign Castro waged against the Cuban pro-democracy movement earlier this year. Over the course of a few weeks in late March and early April, Castro's regime arrested an array of political opposition leaders and pro-democracy advocates. Inside of a month, the dissidents were arrested, arraigned, tried, and sentenced.

Dr. Biscet, already in state custody at the time, was tried in tandem with the other dissidents, and in April was sentenced for 25 years for "serving as a mercenary to a foreign state."

Dr. Biscet is a 42-year-old physician. He is President of the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights. He is a well-known follower of Ghandi and Martin Luther King, and is heralded for his religious and civic leadership. Just last week, on November 11, at Prison Kilo Cinco y Medio, Dr. Biscet peacefully protested with six other political prisoners the cruel treatment given by prison authorities to the family of an-

other fellow prisoner during their scheduled visit. Fearing that Dr. Biscet was becoming a leader among the other prisoners, he was transferred the next day to another maximum security prison in the province of Pinar del Rio, called Kilo 8.

In Kilo 8, Dr. Biscet has been confined in a punishment cell that he has referred to as a dungeon with another prisoner who has committed 12 violent criminal assaults, a blatant attempt to put Dr. Biscet's life in danger. His wife and parents traveled to Kilo 8 this Monday, November 17, for their assigned family visit. When they arrived, prison authorities informed them that Dr. Biscet was punished for 21 days without family visits. They told his family he is currently being confined in a cell with no sunlight that literally measures four feet by four feet. They told his family that he had been denied food supplies and toiletries and is without writing or reading materials.

Upon hearing this news, his mother required medical attention from the prison staff due to a sudden rise in her blood pressure and the horror of her son's living conditions. Mr. Speaker, compelled by circumstances and the persistence of Dr. Biscet's wife, prison authorities allowed his mother to see her son, but only for 10 minutes. Dr. Biscet asked his mother to alert international public opinion, since he had broken no prison rule, and they were forcing him to share a cell with a violent criminal intentionally placing his life in danger.

So I join my colleagues here on the House floor to inform Congress and the American public of the inhumane treatment of Dr. Biscet. I ask all my colleagues to join us here on the floor and to demand the unconditional and immediate release of Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet and all those prisoners whose only crime is a desire for basic human rights. We must send a strong message to Castro that his abuse of Cuban political prisoners has not gone unnoticed and will not be allowed to continue.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINCHEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DR. OSCAR BISCET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my colleagues

today in support of one of the most courageous men of peace on the planet today, an advocate for freedom, Dr. Oscar Biscet. A long-time human rights activist and pro-life doctor in Cuba, Dr. Biscet had already spent some 3 years, unjustly, 3 years in Castro's gulag for speaking out against the death penalty in Cuba and for calling for the release of all political prisoners.

After his release, Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 2002, he remained undaunted by his oppressors, Castro and the brutal thugs who run his regime, and continued to attempt to peacefully organize human rights' supporters. Dr. Biscet was redetained with 16 other dissidents after they attempted to simply meet in a home in Havana to discuss human rights last September. Just think about that, my colleagues, just simply meeting, gathering together, and in come the thugs to take you away.

When police prevented him from entering that home, Dr. Biscet and others, just like Dr. Martin Luther King, sat down in the street and protested, uttering slogans like "long live human rights," and "freedom for political prisoners." For that, he received a draconian 25-year prison sentence in April. That was during the same time when there was a massive crackdown that Amnesty International pointed out, reminiscent of what happened during the early years of Castro's brutal regime when massive numbers of people were arrested and given long prison sentences, many of those, 75 of them, some of the bravest and brightest in Cuba today: Independent journalists and democracy activists, who now themselves languishing in prison.

Mr. Speaker, while reports of Dr. Biscet's actions in prison continue to be heroic, and the word does get out, this is a man of conscience, a man of courage, the reports of his mistreatment, however, have been equally horrific. He is heroic; the mistreatment is horrific. For months, we know that he has endured solitary confinement for refusing to wear the prisoner's uniform. He has lived with insufficient light, and now no light at all, no running water and no bed. His benign and peaceful protest on November 11 on behalf of the cruel treatment of another prisoner, even though he is suffering so much, Mr. Speaker, he speaks out and tries to lend a hand to other prisoners who are being mistreated, for that he was moved to a punishment cell, as my colleagues have pointed out, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART), who spoke so eloquently a moment ago, to a cell known as the dungeon.

This man, this peaceful man, this Martin Luther King of Cuba is now languishing in a dungeon, a small confined area with no light. He has been put into a prison cell, this dungeon, with a man who on 12 different occasions has committed assault.

I remember during the years of Nicolae Ceausescu, the brutal thug in

Romania, what he used to do. He would put people who committed crimes in with peaceful activists, political prisoners, and political prisoners of conscience with the hope and the thought that these men of violence would commit violence against these peaceful activists, and God forbid that that happens. We will continue to speak out, and, hopefully, nothing will happen as a result of this emplacement of this thug in with Dr. Biscet.

Let me just point out to my colleagues that in the spring Dr. Biscet, and this just shows the heart of this great man, stated "I am innocent of the charges for which I was condemned, which is why I will maintain my ideological position. A true man cannot betray himself, so I can only appeal to the living God and pray to our Lord. And he is not neutral and never abandons his flock." What a faith. Here is a man crying out from prison, praying to God above, asking that he not be forgotten in a way that is reminiscent of our Lord when he said, why have I been abandoned? Well, in this case he is saying despite his ordeal that God will not abandon him.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot abandon him, and that is why we are speaking out and speaking out so strongly tonight. We cannot allow this prisoner of conscience, and there are hundreds, as the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) said so ably earlier, hundreds who live likewise in Castro's gulag. His wife, Elsa Morejon, has said his crimes are honoring the universal declaration of human rights: Opposing abortion and the death penalty and organizing civil rights movements through nonviolent civil disobedience to reclaim the rights of fellow Cubans that he believes are being violated. For that, 25 years being mistreated and being treated in a way that we would not even treat our animals.

Let me just conclude, Mr. Speaker. After months of brutal treatment, his health is very poor. We have to speak out. There are Members who take to the floor here and say we need to have an expansion of travel and trade and the like. Well, not until these individuals, starting with Dr. Biscet, are released. Otherwise, the blame and the crime of complicity rests at your doorstep.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

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ENERGY BILL LEAVES NO ENERGY COMPANY BEHIND

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, it has been a great week for the most influential, the most well-heeled lobbyists in Washington. Earlier in the week the House passed an energy bill which one very prominent leader of this country called the "no lobbyist left behind" bill. This energy legislation was full of benefits for oil companies, for natural gas companies, and for electric utility companies. As I said, it was a great week for some of the most well-heeled, most influential lobbyists in Washington.

The energy policy started with bad process as Vice President CHENEY convened a secret group of energy lobbyists to draft the administration's energy plan. Citizen after citizen, group after group have tried to find out who attended these meetings with Vice President CHENEY, what was discussed, and what they were all about. Vice President CHENEY refused; but we should not be surprised that he would bring energy executives into the Vice President's office to secretly write an energy bill. After all, Vice President CHENEY himself was an oil company executive, or should I say still is. He still receives \$3,000 a week from Halliburton, one of the major energy companies in the United States. The Vice President is meeting secretly with energy company, oil company executives, and is still receiving \$3,000 a week from Halliburton, that company that is making billions of dollars in unbid contracts in Iraq given by the administration, and kicking back or contributing large numbers of dollars to the Bush reelection campaign.

So CHENEY is meeting with the energy companies to draft legislation that one prominent Republican said was a no lobbyist left behind bill. It was an early Christmas present for the energy industry, and for oil, gas and utilities, and some have estimated as much as \$100 billion.

Some of the corporate giveaways that harm consumers in this bill were granting Enron's last wish to repeal the consumer-oriented, Public Utility Holding Companies Act, making taxpayers rather than corporate polluters pay to clean up leaking underground storage tanks, even when we know exactly which corporation is responsible for the pollution; allowing power companies to charge consumers more, ostensibly to finance system upgrades without any assurance that the resulting changes will actually benefit consumers; making taxpayers pay to clean up nuclear accidents and compensate

victims even when the accidents result from a private contractor's intentional misconduct; deleting bipartisan provisions to ensure the safety and security of crosscountry nuclear shipments. All of those provisions were in there as gifts to the oil and gas and electric companies that Vice President CHENEY still represents, amazingly enough as Vice President.

At the same time, that energy bill was loaded up with all kinds of tax breaks, all kinds of tax provisions helping those energy companies. At the same time this legislation, this early corporate Christmas present for which they give great thanks, included all kinds of harm to the environment. It allows oil companies to pump diesel fuels and other toxics underground and expand their operations without regard to the Clean Water Act groundwater runoff requirements, opening Federal lands to powerlines and mineral developments, and exempting significant segments of our communities and our industries from Clean Air Act requirements.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Congress earlier in the week passed one major corporate giveaway to the energy industry, to oil, gas and electric utilities. Tomorrow Congress is going to attempt, Republican leadership is going to attempt to do their second major corporate giveaway of tax dollars, and that is the so-called prescription drug Medicare bill. This is not a prescription drug bill; this is a Medicare privatization, insurance company/drug company giveaway bill.

The prescription drug companies under this legislation stand in the next few years to profit \$139 billion more than they already have. And already for 20 years running, the drug industry has been the most profitable industry in America, by any measurement: return on investment, return on sales, return on equity, while enjoying the lowest tax rate of any industry in America.

Mr. Speaker, the second part of this bill gives a \$20 billion gift, \$8 billion this year, \$12 billion in 2006, to the large insurance companies and HMOs in order to get them to offer private drug insurance.

What most of us say is let us do the Medicare bill right, give the drug benefit directly to seniors; do not do it by enriching the drug companies and enriching the insurance companies.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a good week for big business in Washington and for corporate lobbyists, and a bad week for America's consumers.

INHUMANE TREATMENT OF DR. OSCAR E. BISCET GONZALEZ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to speak on an issue dear to my heart. At the same moment